

Salvation: God's Graciousness in Christ, and the Roman Catholic Doctrine of Justification

by Richard M. Bennett

Scriptural Meaning of Justification

The precise import of the term “to justify” is clearly seen in that it is the exact opposite or contrast to the term “to condemn.” *“It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns?”* (Romans 8:33-34)¹ Condemnation is not a process by which a good man is made bad, but is the verdict of a judge declaring a man blameworthy. Now just as to condemn a man is not to infuse evil into him, but declares him guilty, so justification does not infuse goodness into a man, but declares that he is just. Justification is that formal sentence of the Divine Judge whereby He pronounces the believer before Him righteous.

The Author of the Gospel: God Just and Justifier

It is as *“the God of all grace”*² that seeks, finds, and saves His people. Justification is God's gift to the believer, which is imputed to him based on Christ's finished work on the cross.³ Quite simply, justification is God's righteous judgment of the believer, declaring him both guiltless in regard to sin, and righteous in regard to his moral standing in Christ before the Holy God. This judgment by God is legally possible because of the substitutionary death and resurrection of Christ Jesus in the place of the believer. Justification is first and foremost God's legal judgment of the believer. *“Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.”*⁴

Justification is God's righteous judgment to demonstrate in the words of Romans 3:26, that He is *“just and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus.”* This righteous judgment of God is the center of the apostolic preaching of the good news in the Bible. It is a righteous judgment freely given by God:

²¹ *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;* ²² *even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference:* ²³ *for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;* ²⁴ *being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:* ²⁵ *Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;* ²⁶ *to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus.* (Romans 3:21-26)

Purpose of the Justification: to Reveal Christ's Righteousness

¹ For a detailed study of the term see texts such as Deuteronomy 25:1, Job 9:20, Job 32:2, Proverbs 17:15, Matthew 12:37, Luke 7:29, 1 Timothy 3:16 Psalm 143:2. Isaiah 50:7, 8.

² 1 Peter 5:10

³ Romans 4:5-8, II Corinthians 5:19-21, Romans 3:21-28, Titus 3:5-7, Ephesians 1:7, Jeremiah 23:6, I Corinthians 1:30-31, Romans 5:17-19.

⁴ Romans 5:18.

The Scripture declares the righteousness of God without the law is manifested; it is the purpose of the Gospel. What is declared is not human works righteousness of any kind, but rather it is God's righteousness in the Lord Jesus Christ that is revealed. The Gospel is the demonstration, in concrete historical fact, of the perfect satisfaction which Christ rendered to all the demands of the law, and which God places to the credit of every true believer in Him. Before God's all Holy nature, sin had to be punished and true righteousness established. This has been accomplished in the faithful obedience of the Lord Christ Jesus and His propitiatory sacrifice. Thus Christ's faithfulness is proclaimed in v. 22, "*even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ*. When the Bible declares that justification is God's gift to the believer, it also shows in few words what this justification is. **Justification is found in and of Christ**. It is the demonstration of the faithfulness⁵ of Jesus Christ, even unto death. Such perfect rectitude is of God, and from God, "*even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ*" (v. 22). The great news is that this absolute righteousness is "*unto all and upon all them that believe*."

Legally what is shown is the true believer's identification with the Lord Jesus Christ. God has provided Christ's righteousness to sinners who believe. There are several passages in which faithfulness of the Lord is mentioned. In each case, the name of Jesus Christ is in the genitive case indicating that faithfulness a character quality that He possesses. Galatians 2:16 is an example of this usage, "*Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ*." Knowing that the law must be fulfilled for God to declare a person righteous, the faithfulness of Christ must be also understood as applying specifically to this context.

The Human Condition and the Graciousness of God

According to verse 23, "*for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*", every person under the law has fallen short of the glory of God and thereby is possessed both of a bad heart because of sin nature and a bad record because of personal sin. The good news is stated in v. 24, "*being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*." This is the pure Sovereign grace of God, showing as it were the very heart of God. His own graciousness moved Him, to devise a way whereby His wondrous love could be seen in the vilest of rebels. As it is written, "*I, even I, am He that blots out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins*" (Isaiah 43:25). The design of God is highlighted by the adverb "freely". This excludes all consideration of anything in man or from which should be the cause or condition of justification. That same Greek adverb is translated "without a cause" in John 15:25, "*they hated Me without a cause*." The believer's right standing before God is in Christ's redemption, which is freely given, as it is outside anything he can do for himself. "*Being justified*" means that since there remains nothing for man in himself, being smitten by the just judgment of God, but to perish, he is to be justified freely through God's provision in Christ. There is perhaps no passage in the whole Scripture that illustrates in such a striking manner the efficacy of Christ's righteousness as this one does. It shows that God is the effective cause of salvation "*through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*." This shows that being justified is

⁵ Greek *pistis*. There are many contexts where this is necessarily translated faithfulness Matthew 23:23, Romans 3:3, Galatians 5:22, Titus 2:10, etc. There are several passages in which faithfulness of the Lord is mentioned. In each case, name of Jesus Christ is in the genitive case indicating that faithfulness is a character quality which He processes (Galatians 2:16, 3:22; Ephesians 3:12, Philippians 3:9).

freely by His grace, through Christ Jesus' payment and nothing from the believer, lest one might be bold enough to attempt to add his own merit to God's grace.

Riches of God's Grace: Work's Righteousness Excluded

Herein is the love of God shown through his Son, Jesus Christ, in that this gift of righteousness, which cost Christ Jesus his life, is a finished work and is freely given. For to whom does God owe anything? And who can meet His standards under the law? So who can bargain with God or with Christ Jesus that he should even think of offering God anything in exchange for God's righteous judgment of himself? To make such a natural and ridiculous offer would be to attempt bribery of the highest order. Again and again the Bible states, as in the above text, that Christ's righteousness is imputed to the believer freely by God, or by God's grace alone. It is in Christ alone that one has right standing before the All Holy God *"In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."* (Ephesians 1:7)

Biblical justification, therefore, is perfect and a finished work of God. *"It is God that justifies."*⁶ Justification is God's work alone to show His righteousness and the fact that He alone saves. Once God has justified any person, He views that person *"in Christ"*⁷, for God, having forgiven the sinner, reckons to his account Christ's righteousness. Thus justification is by faith alone *"without the deeds of the law."*⁸

In the Lord Jesus, believers have a righteousness without spot or blemish, perfect and all glorious; a righteousness which has not only expiated all their sins, but satisfied every requirement of the law's precepts. It is not a transfusion of Christ's righteousness unto those who are to be justified, so that they could thereby be inherently righteous. No it is a Divine and legal right to eternal life and the title to an everlasting inheritance.

The perfect meritorious obedience of Christ is so truly transferred to believers that they will be called "the righteous" in the last judgment. (Matthew 25:40). Surely the believer has cause to cry out in praise in the words of Psalm 71:15-16 *"my mouth shall show forth thy righteousness, thy salvation all the day. I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only."*

The Official Roman Catholic Teaching: Summary

The full picture of the Roman Catholic salvation process begins with new birth, which is said to occur in infant baptism and which purportedly washes away original sin. The process of salvation is a long journey through all the sacraments, with the Sacrifice of the Mass, central to most events. Good works, merit, sacraments and saints, are all involved, but the focal point is always on inner moral goodness which one is always attempting to increase in order to be good enough to die in "sanctifying grace" and then to be saved or at least to land for a time in purgatory. In the Roman teaching, no assurance of salvation is ever given, even to the most devout.

⁶ Romans 8:33.

⁷ The concept in Christ (in the Beloved, in Him, in Whom etc) occurs 18 times in Ephesians Ch 1 & 2.

⁸ Romans 3:28.

Starting Point

The first major difference between biblical truth and Roman Catholic teaching is moral condition of the individual needing reconciliation of man with God. Ephesians 2:1 states clearly the moral condition of a person before conversion, “*And you has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.*” Colossians 2:13 also states the moral condition clearly, “*And you, being dead in your sins....*” Because of Adam's sin mankind is born spiritually dead. Romans 3:10-11 clearly depicts mans state, “*As it is written, ‘There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God.’*” Quite different to this, is the proclamation of Rome,

“... Nevertheless man has been **wounded by sin**. He finds by experience that his body is in revolt. His very dignity therefore requires that he should glorify God in his body, and not allow it to serve the evil inclinations of his heart... When he is drawn to think about his real self he turns to those deep recesses of his being where God who probes the heart awaits him, and **where he himself decides his own destiny in the sight of God**”.⁹

In contrast to the Biblical position of being spiritually dead, Rome stresses, human dignity and the ability to effectively choose good. Thus the Vatican council 11 states,

“Man gains such dignity when, ridding himself of all slavery to the passions, he presses forward towards his goal by freely choosing what is good, and, by his diligence and skill, effectively secures for himself the means suited to this end. **Since human freedom has been weakened by sin it is only by the help of God’s grace that man can give his actions their full and proper relationship to God.**”¹⁰

If one is ever to understand the good news of the gospel, one must begin Biblically with the bad news that of himself man cannot secure his own destiny before the All Holy God because he is spiritually dead in trespasses and sins.

The Focus of faith in Catholic documents

The Roman Catholic Church focuses a person’s faith for salvation to the Roman Catholic Church herself. Thus she states in her *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994)¹¹,

Para. 824 “**It is in the Church** that ‘the fullness of the means of salvation’ has been deposited. It is in her that ‘by the grace of God we acquire holiness.’”

Para. 982 “**There is no offense, however serious, that the Church cannot forgive.** ‘There is no one, however wicked and guilty, who may not confidently hope for forgiveness, provided his repentance is honest.’”

Para. 983

Priests have received from God a power that he has given neither to angels nor to archangels.... God above confirms what priests do here below.

Were there no forgiveness of sins in the Church, there would be no hope of life to come or eternal liberation. let us thank God who has given his Church such a gift.”

Para 1129

⁹ Vatican Council II No. 64, *Gaudium et Spes*, Vol. I, Sec. 14, p. 915 in *Documents of Vatican II, Vatican Collection*, Vol. I, Austin P. Flannery, O.P., Ed. (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., Grand Rapids, MI 1984)

¹⁰ Ibid Sec. 17, p. 917

¹¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1994), hereafter referred to as CCC. Bolding in any quotation indicates emphasis added in this paper.

The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are *necessary for salvation*. 'Sacramental grace' is the grace of the Holy Spirit, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament.

The Roman “Process” of Justification

The “process” begins for most Catholics at baptism when the Church administers baptism to them. The Roman Catholic Church teaches as dogma that justification is conferred through her sacraments and that it consists of inner righteousness whereby a man, it is stated, becomes just within himself. The Church of Rome condemns the biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone. This was done at the Council of Trent. Present day dogma of the RCC not only upholds the teaching of the Council of Trent but also declares that such Councils are infallible.¹² The Council of Trent proclaims the following curses:

If anyone shall say that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this confidence alone by which we are justified: let him be anathema [cursed].¹³

If anyone shall say that by the said sacraments of the New Law, grace is not **conferred** from the work which has been worked [*ex opere operato*] but that faith alone in the divine promise suffices to obtain grace: let him be anathema.¹⁴

Rome’s reason for such a curse on those who hold to “justification by faith alone” is logical because of what she refuses to concede. For her, justification is not an immediate declaration of God and received by faith alone; rather, she teaches that grace is conferred through her sacraments. Thus she is able to make a place for herself as a necessary means through which inner righteousness is given.

Present Day Teaching of Internal Righteousness

Rome's claim is that justification is internal and, with a few exceptions, is exclusively granted through her sacramental system. Thus she states,

“The Most Holy Trinity gives the baptized [person] **sanctifying grace, the grace of justification**”¹⁵

And

“Justification is conferred in Baptism, the sacrament of faith. It conforms us to the righteousness of God, **who makes us inwardly just** by the power of his mercy.”¹⁶

Both of these claims are frontal attacks on the truth of God's written Word. In the Lord's declaration, the believer is justified in Christ alone. “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world...*”¹⁷ To be chosen in Christ shows that justification is not of any person’s doing nor is it anything that resides within any person. Justification is not recognition of anything that a person deserves, but rather the

¹² CCC, Para. 891.

¹³ Henry Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, Tr. by Roy J Deferrari from *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 13th ed. (B. Herder Book Co., 1957), #822, Canon 12.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, #851, Canon 8.

¹⁵ CCC, Para. 1266.

¹⁶ CCC, Para. 1992.

¹⁷ Ephesians 1:3.

heavenly Father has chosen that person in Christ before he or she has done anything good or bad.¹⁸ Rome's affirmation of infused righteousness as a basis of justification is a negation of consistent Biblical teaching that justification is positional legal righteousness in Christ¹⁹ who is the only foundation for it.

Ephesians 1:6 clearly declares the legal residence of the believer. One's acceptance is in the beloved, i.e., Christ, "*To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us accepted in the beloved.*" The location of God's choice is revealed, it is Christ, the Beloved. The supreme and conclusive purpose is immediately added, that all is to the glorious praise of His abundant grace. The doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church attempts to destroy entirely the biblical doctrine of justification. It endeavors to rob the glory of salvation, from the all Holy God.

The Lord continually shows the believer in His Word where he or she is eternally and splendidly saved. "*And you are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power.*"²⁰ As to one's dwelling wholly in Christ, it is in order that the believer, having obtained Him, may possess in Him a complete perfection. The Roman Catholic Church does not rest satisfied with Christ alone, her process program in fact nullifies the grace of God²¹. What is most serious, the very truth of the Gospel is thus made void. The process system is a hopeless practice born of a blasphemous idea. Rather, "*It is God that justifies.*"²²

Rome's Definitive Teaching on Grace and Justification

Biblically defined, grace is God's unmerited favor freely granted to the believer. In the formal teaching of the Catholic Church, however, grace is neither "*the power of God unto salvation*"²³ nor the demonstration of Who God is, "*that He might be just and the justifier of him, who believes in Jesus*"²⁴. Rather, Rome defines grace as merely a help given to humans. "Grace is the help God gives us to respond to our vocation of becoming his adopted sons. It introduces us into the intimacy of the Trinitarian life."²⁵

Rather than accepting the biblically defined condition of man being dead *in trespasses and sins*²⁶, Rome has posited the idea of a spark of spiritual life in a person whereby that person can cooperate with God in his or her salvation. This is consistent with Greek mysticism, as it has infected the Western world. In place of the biblical teaching that God's one time act of imputing a person's sin to Christ and His righteousness to the believer, Rome teaches that grace is a quality (known as "sanctifying grace") that resides within a person, making him or her pleasing to God. The whole idea of moral justice being located inside a person rather than an efficient

¹⁸ "*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*" Romans 5:8. Also Romans 4:1-5, 9:11.

¹⁹ Psalm 32:2, 71:15-16, 130:3; Isaiah 45:24-25, 54:17, 61:10; Jeremiah 23:6, 33:16, 51:10; Daniel 9:24; Luke 18:14; Romans 1:17, 3:21-22, 4:6, 11, 5:18-19; I Corinthians 1:30; II Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 1:6; Colossians 2:10, 3:3; II Peter 1:1, and elsewhere.

²⁰ Colossians 2:10.

²¹ "*Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; you are fallen from grace.*" Galatians 5:4.

²² Romans 8:33.

²³ Romans 1:16.

²⁴ Romans 3:26.

²⁵ CCC, Para. 2021.

²⁶ Ephesians 2:1.

cause outside a person blatantly contradicts the biblical concept of justification by imputation of Christ's righteousness. This is in stark contrast to the Biblical teaching of positional legal righteousness in Christ alone.²⁷

The Claim of “Associate Partnership” In Grace

The Catholic is taught that with God’s help, he can claim merit of his own before God. This is because of the grandiose idea of an “associate partnership” of God and man together in the work of salvation. Under the same general heading "Grace and Justification" Rome states,

“We can have merit in God’s sight only because of God’s free plan **to associate man with the work of his grace**. Merit is to be ascribed in the first place to the grace of God, and secondly to man’s collaboration. Man’s merit is due to God.”²⁸

The fuzzy wording, “to associate man with the work of his grace” attempts to gainsay the clarity and truth of the Scripture. The work required by God was solely that of the God-man Christ Jesus, not man in general.²⁹

The Dying and “Cooperation In Grace”

The same message is given to the sick and dying. By the “grace” of the sacrament of the sick, these are told that suffering becomes a partnership in the Lord’s saving work. Thus Rome declares:

“*Union with the passion of Christ*. By the grace of this sacrament the sick person receives the strength and the gift of uniting himself more closely to Christ’s Passion: in a certain way he is *consecrated* to bear fruit by configuration to the Savior’s redemptive Passion. **Suffering, a consequence of original sin, acquires a new meaning; it becomes a participation in the saving work of Jesus.**”³⁰

This message of “a participation in the saving work of Jesus” is a damnable lie to be spoken into the ears of those who are sick and dying. Christ’s redemptive work is His and His alone. The doctrine of “a participation in the saving work of Jesus” is utterly perverse in that holds out a false trust to trust in ones own suffering as adding something to that of the Lord. Such a concept is an utter lie as it denies the repeated statements of God’s truth in Scripture.

The Claim for Partners in the Redeeming Sacrifice

The blasphemy continues with the concept of Christ Jesus desiring partnership in His redeeming work. Rome officially teaches:

“The cross is the unique sacrifice of Christ, the ‘one mediator between God and men.’ But because in his incarnate divine person he has in some way united himself to every man, **‘the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God,** in the paschal mystery’ is offered to all man. He calls his disciples to ‘take up [their] cross and follow [him],’ for ‘Christ also suffered for [us], leaving [us] an example so that [we] should follow in his steps.’ **In fact Jesus desires to associate with his redeeming sacrifice those who were to**

²⁷ Ephesians 1:3-14, Philippians 3:8-9, Colossians 3:3-4, Romans 3:24, 5:19, Isaiah 45:24-25, Psalm 71:16, Jeremiah 23:6. See longer list in footnote #19

²⁸ CCC, Para. 2025.

²⁹ Romans 5:12-17, II Corinthians 5:21, Ephesians 2:8-9 and elsewhere.

³⁰ CCC, Para. 1521.

be its first beneficiaries. This is achieved supremely in the case of his mother, who was associated more intimately than any other person in the mystery of his redemptive suffering.”³¹

This Roman Catholic doctrine of “being made partners” with God in Christ’s death and resurrection is impious in that on a false basis, it subtly holds out false hope to man. There is no scriptural basis to the idea of being made partners with Christ in the paschal mystery. Such a concept is an utter lie as it denies the repeated statements of God’s truth in Scripture. The work of redemption is “*by Himself*”³², “*without the deeds of the law*”³³, “*not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast*”³⁴, “*not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us...*”³⁵

According to Biblical teaching, the truly saved person does indeed purify himself, but this purification is based solely on Christ Jesus' faithfulness, and on being legally God's sons. “*For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.... Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth...*”³⁶ Biblical sanctification does indeed involve mortification; indeed the believer must take up his or her cross and follow Him. All of that is clearly sanctification, and does involve the believer’s cooperation. The confusion of sanctification with justification is typical of official Roman teaching. Those who write these doctrines of Rome know intellectually the distinction, “*if ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, we see; therefore your sin remains.*”³⁷

Rome's “Second Plank” Justification

Justification in Rome's traditional and official teaching is totally different from Scripture. For Catholics who have fallen in grave sin, she claims “the second plank. Thus she officially states,

“It is to them that the sacrament of Penance offers a new possibility to convert and to recover the grace of justification. The Fathers of the Church present this sacrament as ‘the second plank [of salvation] after the shipwreck which is the loss of grace.’”³⁸

This “second plank” justification is law for the sinner in Roman teaching.

“One who desires to obtain reconciliation with God and with the Church, must confess to a priest all the unconfessed grave sins he remembers after having carefully examined his conscience.”³⁹

In this “recovery of justification” there is a declaration but it is not that of Scripture, “*to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus.*” Rather, it is that of human being declaring “**I absolve you from your sins in the name**

³¹ CCC, Para. 618. Square brackets are in the original text.

³² Hebrews 1:3.

³³ Romans 3:28.

³⁴ Ephesians 2:8-9.

³⁵ Titus 3:5.

³⁶ Colossians 3:3,5.

³⁷ John 9:41.

³⁸ CCC, Para 1446.

³⁹ CCC, Para. 1493.

of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁰ This hopeless ritual proceeds from a improper idea of justification.

The Gospel Proclaimed Not Sins Whispered

Rome claims John 20:19,22-23 as a proof of her teaching. A study of the actual words of John 20:23 confirms that rather than anything judicially enacted through any “sacrament”, the forgiveness spoken of, is that which is proclaimed by the Gospel. Here, unquestionably, the Lord has declared, in a few words, the sum of the Gospel. The Lord gave authority to the disciples to declare forgiveness to those whom God had already forgiven. The commission given in this passage in John is a parallel to similar passages such as Luke 24:47, Matthew 28:18-20, and Mark 16:15-16. This is the way the Apostles understood and obeyed the commission, as evidenced throughout the Acts of the Apostles. Christ did not appoint confessors to probe intimately into each sin in whispers. He commissioned preachers of his Gospel, who shall cause their voice to be heard. Through the preaching of the Word, God seals on the hearts of the believer the grace of the atonement obtained through Christ alone. The manner of forgiving sins in Scripture is the proclamation of the Gospel.

Dollinger, one of the most respected Roman Catholic historians, declared that the sacrament of penance (auricular confession) was unknown in the West for one thousand one hundred years and never known in the East. He wrote, “...So again with Penance. What is given as the essential form of the sacrament was unknown in the Western Church for eleven hundred years, and never known in the Greek.”⁴¹

Rome's Claim to Interchange-Justification

Rome's justification continues with an interchange of holiness in expiation of sin, shared even with those in purgatory. She officially declares,

“In the communion of saints, ‘a perennial link of charity exists between the faithful who have already reached their heavenly home, those who are expiating their sins in purgatory and those who are still pilgrims on earth. Between them there is, too, an abundant exchange of all good things.’ In this wonderful exchange, the holiness of one profits others, well beyond the harm that the sin of one could cause others. Thus recourse to the communion of saints lets the contrite sinner be more promptly and efficaciously purified of the punishments for sin.”⁴²

An abundant exchange of all good things in Scripture is in Christ alone, “*In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace*”⁴³ To assign Christ's role to humans is a serious contradiction of God's truth. Nevertheless, Rome's imputation of merit does not stop there. After stating, “the ‘treasury of the Church’ is the infinite value, which can never be exhausted, which Christ’s merits have before God,”⁴⁴ she proposes an imputation of the merits of Mary and the saints to the faithful.

⁴⁰ CCC, Para. 1449.

⁴¹ von Dollinger, *The Pope and the Council by Janus*, Authorized tr. from the German “*Janus*”: *Der Papst und das Concil* (Boston, MA: Roberts Brothers, 1870) p.50.

⁴² CCC, Para. 1475.

⁴³ Ephesians 1:7.

⁴⁴ CCC, Para. 1476.

“This treasury includes as well the prayers and good works of the Blessed Virgin Mary. They are truly immense, unfathomable, and even pristine in their value before God. In the treasury, too, are the prayers and good works of all the saints, all those who have followed in the footsteps of Christ the Lord and by his grace have made their lives holy and carried out the mission the Father entrusted to them. In this way they have attained their own salvation and at the same time cooperated in saving their brothers in the unity of the Mystical Body.”⁴⁵

God's righteousness credited to the believer at Christ's expense is truly “awesome” in the root meaning of that word. The believer is filled again and again with awe, worship, and praise to the Holy God Who Himself has provided the permanent finished work of justification for sin.

To purport an imputation of righteousness outside of Him is preposterous in face of Biblical truth. In the Lord's own words "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.*"⁴⁶ The assertion that there exists an exchange of merit between the believer, Mary, and the saints, is an effrontery to the Biblical truth that God alone justifies the sinner.

Conclusion

Scripture repeatedly states that our works profit nothing towards our justification. A wonderful summary of this truth is given in Hebrews 1:3. "*Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high*"⁴⁷.

The design of the passage is to show what likeness the Father bears to the Son. God's purpose in this is to build up the believer's faith, so that the believer may learn that God is made known to him in no other way than in Christ, "*brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.*" Further, when the Word declares “by himself” as a contrast, it is one, not many. Excluded is all other means or helps by stating that the price and the power of purgation were found only in Christ.

In contrast the Church of Rome declares again and again her “process” program of justification. Thus she has a merit system, and she declares the necessity of auricular confession, with authoritative absolution. Intercession of saints departed, purgatory, sacraments, obviously contravene the total sufficiency of finished work of the Lord, "*for you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer you them that are entering to go in*"⁴⁸.

If that were all, it would be sad enough. Such a system, however, which declares justification to be an inner process, also declares loudly by implication that the sacrifice of Christ for the sins of the world is not sufficient. Thus Rome's process theology demeans the perfect work of the Lord. "*How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.*"⁴⁹

⁴⁵ CCC, Para. 1477.

⁴⁶ John 10:1.

⁴⁷ Hebrews 1:3.

⁴⁸ Matthew 23:13.

⁴⁹ Hebrews 2:3.

In practice Rome's attempted "process" fusion of man's merit with God's and its continuing rituals nullify and make void the very grace of God. The language and conduct of Rome are epitomized in one verse of scripture, "*For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.*"⁵⁰

Let the trumpet sound with Biblical distinctives. On the authority of Scripture let it be known that sinners are justified by grace only through faith only in Christ Jesus only! And to God only be the glory! The clear resounding cry is the command of the Lord Himself, "***This is the work of God that you believe on him whom He has sent.***"⁵¹ "***Repent and believe the gospel.***"⁵² ♦

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⁵⁰ Romans 10:3.

⁵¹ John 6:29.

⁵² Mark 1:15.